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ABSTRACT

This document explores a selection influential books and reports on U.S. education that appeared between 1749 and the 1990s. The analysis begins with Benjamin Franklin's "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania", early writings on women's and adult education, the McGuffey reader of the mid-nineteenth century, and Charles Sanders Peirce's philosophy of pragmatism. The document describes the National Education Association (NEA)'s 1893 "Committee of Ten" report, which proposed what became the traditional high school curriculum: English, history, science, mathematics, and foreign language. The 20th century brought on such school reforms as more professional medical training, John Dewey's progressive education theories, and the NEA's seven cardinal principles report that Dewey influenced. Depression-era social reconstruction and sociological research continued into the 1950s and '60s as increased calls for reforms of public education arose. The 1960s and '70s liberalized education through the open classroom concept, increased freedom for students, and a greater awareness of U.S. poverty. In 1983, the National Commission on Education report, "A Nation at Risk: Imperative for Educational Reform," highlighted the crisis of mediocrity in U.S. public education and called for stricter requirements for high school graduation. The report set off both educational reforms and widespread criticism. In 1991 "Savage Inequalities" by Jonathan Kozol identified inequities in educational finance as just as harmful to minorities as unequal educational opportunity. Contains 44 endnotes. (SG)

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Turning Points: Books and Reports That Reflected and Shaped U.S. Education, 1749-1990s

by

Franklin Parker

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Recurring Nature of School Reform. The key books and reports described below in the context of their time show an interesting pattern of recurring school reform. School reform changes tend to occur mainly in two seemingly contradictory directions: toward equalizing educational opportunity and toward higher academic achievement. The American school dilemma has been the search to reconcile qualitative learning with equality of educational opportunity.

From colonial times, formal schooling served mainly elites from wealthy families. The traditional curriculum was classical, then liberal arts, and more recently a core of basic subjects reflecting western values and national needs. Increasing immigration, industrialization, and urbanization fundamentally changed socio-economic-political conditions. As more middle and lower class children, including girls, entered school, democratic thought challenged traditional elite education and pressed for equality of educational opportunity and a broader curriculum.

The elusive golden mean would be high educational standards for all with a varied curriculum that passed on the cultural heritage, strengthened job and professional skills for personal and national economic growth, and also stressed morality for better citizenship. But traditional education persists because Americans have not fully accepted new reforms of public schooling to meet new exigencies. The dilemma remains: Should schools advance elites who can help themselves? Or improve those who cannot help themselves? Or serve both, and if so, how? The following sequence usually recurs: when problems mount, school reforms to solve those problems are introduced. These reforms usually end in a compromise that temporarily eases the problem. When socio-economic and other national crises recur, other dimensions of school reforms are introduced, ending in compromise, and so the cycle continues.

1749: Academies. The education dilemma between serving exclusive elites or diverse mass needs is historic, going back to Benjamin Franklin and earlier. Having done part of his printing apprenticeship in London, Franklin knew about Britain's academies. They were begun by Quakers, Baptists, and other non-Church of England dissenters whose sons were barred from Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Franklin's 1749 Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania favored academies' practical curriculum, terminal school nature, commercial relevance, and enlightened coeducation. He helped develop the first academy in Philadelphia, 1753, which later became the University of Pennsylvania. Thus, Latin grammar schools (1635-1750s) gave way to academies (1750s-1870s) and were succeeded by high schools after

Michigan State Supreme Court Justice Thomas McIntyre Cooley (1824-98) approved tax-supported high schools in the 1872 Kalamazoo case. The recent spectacular growth of community colleges (junior colleges) suggest their possible emergence as the common school attainment level of the near future.

1819: Women's Education. Men-only schools were challenged by the magna carta of U.S. women's higher education: Emma Hart Willard's (1787-1870) 1819 An Address to the Public; Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New York.[1] Her petition for a woman's college resulted in the 1821 founding of the (New York) Female Seminary. The seminary was renamed in 1895 the Emma Willard School, Troy, NY. A century and a half later, Betty Friedan's (1921-) 1963 The Feminine Mystique[2] launched the modern women's movement. While married women kept family and homes going, Friedan said, they also had an equal right to advance their education and careers. Soon after, with passage of Title IX of the 1972 Higher Education Act, equal status for women became federal law.

1826: Lyceum. Adult education needs grew with the westward movement, the forming of new towns, and the spread of newspapers and magazines. Josiah Holbrook (1788-1854), promoter of popular adult education, was a Yale College graduate and private school teacher in his birthplace, Derby, CT. There he also founded an industrial school and then an agricultural school. Holbrook organized the first lyceum (named after Aristotle's school in ancient Athens) in Millbury, MA, November 1826, for "self-culture, community instruction, and mutual discussion of common public interests." He described his idea in The American Lyceum, or, Society for the Improvement of Schools and Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.[3] By 1835, 3,000 towns had lyceums. Soon many more towns were on the lyceum speaker circuit. For a small fee audiences heard lectures on science and other topics in public halls. Other lecture circuits reached even larger audiences, particularly the Chautauqua circuit (about 1873), the secular outgrowth of a Methodist training center for Sunday school teachers at Lake Chautauqua, New York.

1836-57: McGuffey Readers. The unique McGuffey Eclectic Readers series, 1836-57, was widely read in schools and homes. Cincinnati publisher Truman and Smith first invited Catharine Esther Beecher (1800-78) to write such readers. She declined, busy managing with her novelist sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96; wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin), the Western Female Institute in Cincinnati. She recommended as more suitable William Holmes McGuffey (1800-73), Presbyterian minister and language and philosophy teacher at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, who had written about textbook needs. His First Reader, an illustrated alphabet, and Second Reader came out in 1836. The Third Reader, short stories, and Fourth Reader, with lessons in natural history and physics, appeared in 1837. A younger brother, Alexander McGuffey, produced a speller and a Rhetorical Guide in 1844, expanding the speller into Advanced Fifth Reader and Advanced Sixth Reader, 1857. The estimated 125 million copies sold in various editions are said to have influenced the American mind more than any other book except the Bible. McGuffey Readers reflected a puritanical Protestant Christianity; stressed good

conduct, industry, sobriety, thrift, modesty, punctuality, and conformity. Virtue led to success and riches; wrongdoing was punished; church and state were in harmony; patriotism and manifest destiny were unquestioned. The Fifth and Sixth Readers included selections from the classics and made no concession to unfamiliar words. The authors took for granted that young readers would understand or that teachers and parents would explain difficult passages. Besides shaping American character, their recent reissue and use in some school districts shows a nostalgia for lost common experiences and lost national pride.

1878: Pragmatism. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), only recently acknowledged as an original American thinker, first used the term "pragmatism" in a Popular Science Monthly January 1878 article. There was then uncertainty about the nature of magnetism, electricity, and other scientific phenomena. Be more concerned, Peirce wrote, with the practical effect after the use of a theory, act, or idea. The test of anything, he wrote, is in its use, its practical consequences, the results of putting it into practice. Although Peirce was a mathematician and occasionally a lecturer at Harvard and Johns Hopkins universities, his life work was with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. His thoughts about pragmatism were discussed at meetings of Harvard's Metaphysical Club. Fellow member William James (1842-1910), Harvard philosophy and psychology professor and Peirce's friend, became an advocate and popularizer of pragmatism. He made pragmatism better known in his 1890 Principles of Psychology, popularized it in his 1900 Talks to Teachers on Psychology, and further popularized it in his 1902 The Varieties of Religious Experience.[4]

Pragmatism, which Peirce first used and James popularized, John Dewey later embraced as part of his progressive education approach (Peirce taught at Johns Hopkins University when Dewey was there). As a practical way of thinking and doing, pragmatism fitted the American open frontier spirit, agreed with Americans' penchant for trial and error, and lent itself to Americans' practical bent in technology and science. Only in recent times has the moral tone of pragmatism been corrupted to mean "whatever works is good."

1893: Committee of Ten. In 1893 the National Education Association's (NEA) Committee of 10 Report[5] perpetuated the traditional elite high school curriculum. The subjects taught to the college-bound (then under 10 percent) were believed also to be good for the masses going to work. The report--recommending a four-year high school curriculum of English, history, science, mathematics, and a foreign language--did drop Latin and Greek. Chairman Charles W. Eliot, Harvard University president, and the 5 other college presidents on this committee, wanted to formalize college entrance with a standard high school curriculum. This stamp of approval for the traditional curriculum came when the U.S. was changing from a simple rural agrarian society to a complex urban industrial society.

1910: Flexner Report, Medical Education. Turn of the century efforts to professionalize medicine led to Abraham Flexner's (1866-1959) 1910 medical education report.[6] Born to a large poor family in Louisville, KY, he attended the then new Johns Hopkins

University, Baltimore, first U.S. graduate university, intent like its German university model, on stimulating original research among graduate students and faculty . A Louisville high school teacher (1886-90), Flexner then successfully tutored students for ivy league college admission. About 1905, restless, he studied at Harvard, then studied under his physician brother Simon Flexner at New York's Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and studied further at Heidelberg University, Germany. His 1908 book, The American College: A Criticism,[7] impressed Henry Smith Pritchett (1857-1939), president of the newly founded (1905) Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Bent on improving professional education in medicine, dentistry, and engineering, Pritchett asked Flexner if he would make a national study of medical education. Using as models the Johns Hopkins Medical School and the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research, Flexner visited the 155 U.S. and Canadian medical schools. Newspaper publicity evoked by his critical report caused diploma mill-type medical schools to close and weak ones to merge. The Flexner report triggered medical education reform already in sluggish formation. After a career as foundation executive, he founded and was first director of the first "think tank," the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, whose first professor, Albert Einstein, he brought permanently to the U.S.

1916: John Dewey and Progressive Education. From the turn of the 20th century and through many books, John Dewey (1859-1952) urged a changeover from traditional education for selected elites to child-centered public schools for all, with a broader curriculum. Vermont-born and University of Vermont educated, Dewey taught in public schools for three years before entering the Johns Hopkins University doctoral program. He taught psychology and philosophy at the universities of Minnesota (1888-89) and Michigan (1889-94; in Michigan he helped accredit high schools). Invited to head a combined philosophy, sociology, and education department at newly opened (1891) University of Chicago (third graduate university after Johns Hopkins and Clark Universities), Dewey also directed the university's experimental lab school, 1896-1903. He was influenced in Chicago by Jane Addams' (1860-1935) Hull House, a settlement house to ease the adjustment of immigrants; and by Francis Wayland Parker (1837-1902), a progressive educator who had studied in Germany Froebel's learning-through-play kindergarten theories. Dewey used moveable furniture for group work and child-centered learning to motivate student interest. He wanted his students to become independent, knowledgeable, and contributing citizens. Against critics, he defended his experimental progressive lab school program in early books: My Pedagogic Creed, 1897;[8] School and Society, 1899; The Child and the Curriculum, 1902;[9] and others. After 10 years in Chicago, he moved to Columbia University's Philosophy Department, 1904. His best known 1916 Democracy and Education[10] defended a democratic child-centered progressive school with a varied curriculum as best for both students' lives and society's welfare.

1918: Seven Cardinal Principles. Dewey supplied the theory and a model for progressive education. The NEA 1918 cardinal principles report[11] suggested the broader

curriculum needed to meet changed socio-economic-political conditions. The report recommended 7 educational goals: health, command of fundamental processes (basic skills), worthy home membership, vocation, worthy use of leisure, citizenship, and ethical character. This broader curriculum took hold in relatively few suburban areas under enlightened educators. Traditional education still dominated U.S. schools.

The dilemma was: What should high schools, and by implication elementary schools, teach? And how should schools be organized and courses taught? Behind curriculum differences was a political dilemma: To whom do public schools belong? Should they serve elites or the masses and why? And, to serve both, what should be the curriculum mix, administrative arrangement, teaching methods, and appropriate finance? How can schools best meet both student needs and national needs? Also, amid rapid change, can schools combat mounting drug use, crime, violence, the weakening of the family, and other social ills? If so, how?

1929: Middletown, USA. Middletown is the fictitious name for Muncie, IN, which has been studied sociologically for almost a century. First, Robert Staughton Lynd (1892-70) and Helen Merrell Lynd's (1896-1882) 1929 Middletown--A Study in Contemporary American Culture compared Muncie attitudes they found in the 1920s with attitudes previously recorded in the 1880s. They revisited Muncie in the middle of the Depression in their 1937 Middletown in Transition. Theodore Caplow (Robert Lynd's student) asked the same questions in Muncie in his 1982 Middletown Families. Changes over time included more divorce, more drugs, more pornography, more migration into Muncie of blacks and other minorities, some tolerance toward minorities, and somewhat more respect for schools and teachers. What is striking is that a century of sociological findings in Muncie shows more continuity than change--continuity of traditional values, class divisions, and more enthusiasm for sports than for schools and learning.[12]

1930s: Social Reconstruction. The stock market crash in October 1929 heralded the Great Depression. By March 1932, 8 million Americans were jobless. Tin-shack Hoovervilles, soup kitchens, and jobless men selling apples dotted the land. Capitalism and democracy were on trial, with fascism and communism abroad and rising extremism at home. In this context, Teachers College Columbia University (TCCU) Professor George S. Counts's (1889-1874) 1932 Dare the School Build a New Social Order?[13] asked fellow progressive educators to go beyond child-centeredness, avoid neutrality on controversial matters, help students frankly confront socio-economic-political problems, propose solutions, and bring about change. But Social Reconstructionism made little headway against traditional thought and soon declined.

Social Reconstructionist and TCCU colleague Harold O. Rugg's (1886-1960) controversial social studies textbooks drew the ire of conservatives. This Dartmouth College-trained engineer taught statistics to engineers at James Milliken University and the University of Illinois. After working with psychologists preparing army tests in World War I, he taught at

TCCU and was psychologist at its experimental Lincoln School. There he wrote a successful series of social studies textbooks, merging in a new questioning form the subjects of history, civics, sociology, anthropology, and economics. His new social studies texts raised questions about the socio-economic-political problems of that time. By questioning free-enterprise excesses in his social studies textbooks, he became a prime target of conservative reactionaries. Just before U.S. entry into World War II, his books were challenged, removed, and actually burned in some school districts, 1939-41.[14] Counts (but not Rugg) lived long enough to see a resurgence of Social Reconstructionism during Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society period. Unfortunately, the effects of Pres. Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and other Great Society education bills were short-lived as the Vietnam War grew and students protested a U.S. government allied with business and the military and mired in an unpopular war.

1933-41: Eight-Year Study. Progressive educators wanted to prove that child-centered schools were superior to traditional schools. During 1933-41, the Progressive Education Association (PEA, founded 1917) sponsored an 8-year study. The PEA compared the academic progress of students from 15 traditional and 15 progressive high schools through 4 years of high school and 4 years of college. The study claimed to find that the more experimental the high school curriculum, the greater the student success in college; and that college success did not depend on prescribed high school subjects. But conservatives believed the study flawed and discounted its findings.[15]

1950s-60s: Conant Reports. From his prestigious position as Harvard University president (1933-53) and backed by Carnegie and other foundation aid, James Bryant Conant (1893-1978) urged significant public school reforms long before the U.S. was ready to accept them. His 1948 Education in a Divided World: The Function of the Public Schools in Our Unique Society[16] tried unsuccessfully to get public agreement on public school goals. Not until September 1989 did U.S. state governors agree on national education goals, when President Bush called the state governors to an education summit meeting at the University of Virginia.

Conant's 1959 The American High School Today and his 1967 The Comprehensive High School said that to meet both national needs and individual student needs comprehensive high schools must be large enough to have science and language laboratories, offer a varied curriculum, and hold high standards. His 1961 Slums and Suburbs[17] sounded an early but unheeded alarm about rising drug use, crime, and violence in explosive urban schools.

Some Conant recommendations about professionalizing teachers in his 1963 The Education of American Teachers,[18] are now, 30 years later, being urged by the Holmes Group[19] and in John I. Goodlad' s 1990s books described below.[20]

As U.S. ambassador to West Germany (1955-57), Conant saw the several West German state ministers of education successfully share their problems and goals through regular meetings while retaining their decentralized state school systems. In his 1965 Shaping Educational Policy,[21] he urged similar sharing of educational problems by U.S. governors or their

representative in regular meetings. Conant's book led to the Interstate Compact on Education (begun February 18, 1966), whose descendant, the Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO, administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which tests and compares students' academic attainment by states. Conant in the 1950s-60s anticipated current 1990s trends: stronger high schools, improved teacher education, and national public school goals, standards, and achievements. There is in 1993 a serious national movement to set achievement standards in all kindergarten through high school subjects and to test nationally to see if those standards have been achieved.[22]

1961: Bruner's Process of Education. In 1959 the National Academy of Sciences brought together subject matter specialists and professional educators at a Woods Hole, MA, conference. Each blamed the other for low student educational attainment. Harvard University psychologist Jerome S. Bruner's 1961 The Process of Education[23] was written from the clash of ideas at that meeting (where he was recording secretary). Bruner had introduced Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's (1896-1980) books to the U.S. Both believed in conceptual learning. Bruner's oft repeated thought expressed in Process of Education was that any subject can be taught to any child at any age if the material is logically organized and sequentially presented. This psychological justification of conceptual learning (then called the New Learning) led to major revision in the teaching of biology, chemistry, mathematics, and social studies. Frightened reaction to Russia's space-orbiting satellite Sputnik (October 5, 1957) brought government funding for the Bruner-inspired subject-matter-conceptually-learned new curricula. Large funds (Sputnik "fear" money) became available from the National Science Foundation and the 1958 National Defense Education Act. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Prof. Jerrold Zacharias organized government grants to finance summer institutes for science and other teachers to learn to use the new curricula and new textbooks. This massive effort at conceptual learning was short-lived during the 1960s-70s because concept-minded middle class students mainly benefited. The mass of average and below-average students did not have the family background support and early childhood learning to benefit. The Bruner-inspired conceptual approach to learning also faded because of fund cutbacks in the 1970s caused by the OPEC oil crisis (1973), mounting Vietnam War costs, and slowed economic growth.

1960s-70s: Open Classroom. Britain's progressive educator A.S. Neill's (1883-1973) 1960 bestseller, Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing[24] heralded the U.S. Open Classroom (or Open Education) movement, also during the 1960s-70s. Neill defended the trials and successes of his private child-centered Summerhill school in England. Since its founding in 1921, it had salvaged a number of troubled dropouts from tax-supported state schools.

Rising enrollments amid limited classroom space in Britain's World War II bombed school buildings forced British teachers to use hallways and other open spaces creatively for individual and small-to-large group instruction. Among world visitors who flocked to see Leicestershire's creative infant schools was American educator Joseph Featherstone. He wrote

admiringly about Britain's progressive schools in widely distributed New Republic articles (August 8 and September 9, 1967), and in his 1971 Informal Schools in Britain Today: An Introduction.[25] City College of New York Education Prof. Lillian Weber's 1971 English Infant School and Informal Education[26] and her CCNY workshops on British infant schools also helped advance U.S. open education. Another influence was Britain's 1967 Plowden Report, Children and Their Primary Schools,[27] a government report endorsing progressive child-centered lower elementary schools.

A new awareness of U.S. poverty amid affluence also influenced open education. Catholic social worker Michael Harrington's (1928-89) 1960 book, The Other America: Poverty in the U.S.[28] portrayed the urban poor hidden in tenements and the rural poor hidden from sight of travelers on major U.S. highways. His book influenced John F. Kennedy and his advisors just as Kennedy won a crucial Democratic Party primary campaign in West Virginia, 1960, that made him the party's presidential nominee. In West Virginia he and his entourage saw at first hand severe Appalachian poverty. After his election as President, he created Presidential Task Forces on Education and Poverty. The national trauma that followed his November 1963 assassination enabled his successor, Pres. Johnson, to get quick congressional passage of Great Society education programs. Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act, 1964 (creating the Job Corps and Project Head Start), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965 (ESEA 65's Section I [now Chapter I], which still gives funds to school districts on the basis of numbers of families living below the poverty line). ESEA 65 also dispensed federal school aid without regard for students in public or private religious schools. ESEA 65 was crucial historically in overcoming opposition to federal aid to education. Opponents had hitherto blocked federal aid to education for allegedly helping (or, if Catholic, for not helping) private religious schools as well as public schools and thus running counter to U.S. separation of church and state. With passage of ESEA 65 this opposition gave way to the poverty-child-benefit theory, without regard to private/religious school benefit. Many school districts used ESEA 65 and other federal aid to education to start open classrooms before the Vietnam War drained away funds.

Open Education was spurred by critic Ivan Illich's 1970 Deschooling Society,[29] which brazenly called for the unthinkable--actual closing of all public schools as ineffective and replacing them with adult-learner cooperative networks. Open Education was also spurred by sensitive middle class ivy-league-educated teacher-writers whose best-selling books anguished over their trying to reach, teach, and save failure prone urban blacks and Hispanics. Compassionate critic John Holt's (1923-85) books included his 1964 How Children Fail, 1964,[30] his 1970 What Do I Do Monday?,[31] and his 1972 Freedom and Beyond.[32] Holt ultimately gave up on Open Education and became a leader in the parent home schooling movement.

Another compassionate teacher-writer Jonathan Kozol's 1967 Death at an Early Age: Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negroes in the Boston Public Schools [33] won the National Book Award; Herbert Kohl's 1968 Thirty-Six Children[34] told how he abandoned a

traditional curriculum to reach 36 East Harlem, NY, black sixth graders. Nat Hentoff wrote the 1966 Our Children Are Dying,[35] George Dennison's 1969 Lives of Children[36] told of his New York City slum school experience. Charles E. Silberman's Carnegie-Corporation financed 1970 Crisis in the Classroom,[37] and his The Open Classroom Reader[38] defended the movement as it began to decline because teachers were not trained in Open Education techniques and because the Vietnam War had taken needed school funds.

1983: Nation at Risk: Utah educator Terrel H. Bell's (1921-) 1988 The Thirteenth Man: A Reagan Cabinet Memoir[39] told how he was reluctantly appointed Pres. Reagan's thirteenth and last Cabinet member to preside over a U.S. Department of Education he was hired to eliminate or reduce in influence. He remembered Edwin Meece's (then White House Counselor and later U.S. Attorney General) calling the U.S. Department of Education "A great bureaucratic joke." The U.S. Department of Education had been removed from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and elevated to cabinet level by Democratic Pres. Jimmy Carter in 1979, partly because he wanted the votes NEA's 2 million members could and did generate and because he believed public education should have more national attention. Convinced of the need to save the department (Bell had been an officer in its predecessor, the U.S. Office of Education, in 1970-71 and in 1974-76 in the Nixon and Ford Administrations), he appointed an 18-member National Commission on Excellence in Education to report on the state of American education. All but Bell believed the report would gather dust.

In April 1983 came the National Commission's hard-hitting A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,[40] This 32-page "Open Letter to the American People" was widely printed in full in many newspapers and magazines. "Our nation is at risk...," it began: America is in decline because of "a rising tide of mediocrity" in education. Other telling phrases included: "Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world.... History is not kind to idlers.... We live among determined, well-educated and strongly motivated competitors."

On 19 international tests, the report said, U.S. students were never first or second and were last on seven. Other industrial nations' students spend more hours daily and yearly in school. Thirteen percent of all U.S. 17-year-olds and almost 40 percent of minority students are functionally illiterate.

The report recommended for high school graduation: 4 years of English, 3 years each of science and social studies, 2 years of foreign language, and a half-year of computer science. It affirmed and updated the 1893 Committee of Ten and the James B. Conant high school reports. Bell took the report on tour to regional meetings, where it was discussed by educators and the public.

Praise for the report poured in. Pres. Reagan, who had reduced federal aid to education through block grants to the states ("get government off our backs"), now embraced the report.

He was televised visiting and speaking in support of education in public schools for the first time. Having prodded Pres. Reagan into educational leadership and jarred the public to reform public schools, Bell resigned in late 1984 to teach educational administration at the University of Utah. Three years after A Nation at Risk, an April 1986 report found: 41 states had raised their high school graduation requirements, 33 states had initiated student competency tests, 30 states required teacher competency tests, 24 states had started teacher career and salary enhancement programs, and SAT scores had risen. Bell had saved the U.S. Education Department and even enhanced the federal role in education.

A Nation at Risk is credited with spurring significant school reform. Its tenth anniversary, April 1993, brought further critical reflections.[41] Explained John Goodlad, director, Center for Educational Renewal, University of Washington, Seattle: What the National Commission did not tell us was that our society had changed fundamentally, that before 1983 there had been a turnaround in SAT and other test scores. Education reform was exciting in the 1960s but ended about 1968. A Nation at Risk blamed schools when it should have blamed changed conditions which politicians in power did not recognize and could not remedy. School problems arise from unaddressed social problems. How do we meet the needs of children coming to school speaking 50 or more different home languages or who are malnourished? We need massive early childhood education. Politicians cannot turn society around on the backs of schools.

Henry M. Levin of Stanford University, concerned with at-risk students, explained that A Nation at Risk wrongly blamed schools for U.S. economic faults. The report demanded high standards in secondary schools but was not concerned with at-risk students in elementary schools. Our top 10-to-15 percent of students are getting as good an education as any in the world. We can and should do much more to improve the next 35 percent. But the bottom 50 percent is a disaster. Sure, A Nation as Risk generated debate, but that debate is among political groups with narrow interests. We are fighting a battle against increasing odds. Poverty rates keep going up. Of California's 200,000 new students a year, 80 percent have limited English proficiency. A Nation at Risk promoted top-down reform, which has not worked. Better school reform requires better home life, better health, better community support, and visionary political and educational leaders willing to take risks.

Phillip C. Schlechty, president, Center for Leadership in School Reform, Louisville, KY, further explained: A Nation at Risk raised public and political awareness about the problem, but the authors did not have the problem right. They wanted to improve the current system but failed to recognize the need to reinvent systems. Our schools were designed at a time when we did well if 15 percent of students got a high quality of education and the rest could read. Now we expect 95 percent of students to have a high quality of education. The negative part of the report was that it beat up on students, teachers, and the system; made them feel threatened. The awareness since then is the realization that even when all are doing their best in the existing

system, it is not enough. We need systemic change. Merely bypassing the existing system won't work. To restructure schools, you must also restructure the community. The public, business people, and educators must change fundamentally the way the system is put together. If we can revitalize the entire society in the next 20 years, we can have an educational system where 95 percent of students can succeed.

More insights came from Theodore R. Sizer, Brown University professor and chair of the Coalition of Essential Schools: A Nation at Risk did not include many veteran teacher members. It may have been on target politically in creating a sense of urgency but was wrong in top-down reform. Blame for the rising tide of U.S. mediocrity should have been put on TV and on dishonest politics. At least now we have constructive turmoil: different ideas are getting heard and tried. Systemic changes must be governed by what's right for students. Beware the drift away from trusting local communities. It is scary to think that the state knows better than the community and that the nation knows better than the state. We need the political willingness to change the old structure.

1990: Choice. John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe's 1990 Politics, Markets, and America's Schools[42] states that market forces alone can improve schools. If state money (cost per child per school year) goes with students to the school of their parents' choice, then good schools get better (more students, more money), and bad schools are forced to improve or to close. Choice, say the authors, is the only way to reform public education dramatically. Choice gives educators freedom from bureaucratic interference that has plagued public schools and gives parents the opportunity to move their children from bad to better schools.

In opposition, the NEA warned that choice will destroy public schools as we know them. Well off parents have always had a choice, sending about 10 percent of all school age children to private schools. But for a state or the federal government to help financially to replace present public schools with choice plans is mind-boggling. Resulting lawsuits alone will keep an army of lawyers busy for years. Also, schools with minorities and the poor will suffer if middle class students leave and their parents' tax support is withdrawn. Still, a 1990 Gallup poll on education found 62 percent of Americans supporting choice. Choice plans are being considered in about half the states. Milwaukee, WI, was the first to use state money for choice, paying $2,500 per child for low-income and mainly black and Hispanic children whose parents transferred them from public to private nonreligious schools with funds taken from Milwaukee public schools. Choice experiments in Milwaukee, in a Harlem district in New York City, and elsewhere seem successful and are being carefully watched.

Pres. Reagan introduced legislation for choice among both public and private (including religious) schools. Pres. Bush introduced legislation supporting choice only among public schools. Neither choice plan passed Congress. Pres. Clinton favors choice among public schools. Opponents see choice, particularly from public to private schools (with state money following the students) as a dire threat to tax-supported public schools.

Chubb and Moe's case for the superiority of choice was based on findings of sociologist James F. Coleman that private Catholic schools are superior to public schools. Coleman's findings were based on the High School and Beyond study of schools done over a 10-year period. Findings from the original study were found to be flawed by University of Wisconsin at Madison Political Science Professor John F. Witte and others, casting doubt on Coleman's findings and on Chubb and Moe's case for choice. Few know of the doubt cast on the Chubb and Moe book's findings by Professor Witte's little known research. But Chubb and Moe's much publicized book has reinforced public interest in experimenting with choice.

1991: Savage Inequalities. Jonathan Kozol's 1991 Savage Inequalities[43] eloquently says that for poor minorities equality in education finance is as important as equality of education opportunity. Born privileged, having attended an elite prep school, Harvard, and Oxford, Kozol then went to Paris to write. He returned to Harvard to study law but instead became an angry young man of the 1960s--one who did something about his anger. His 1967 Death at an Early Age, which won the National Book Award and touched many readers, told of his teaching poor black children in Boston's poor Roxbury section. His 1988 Rachel and Her Children[44] wrote of homeless children who continued to tell him about their bad schools. Visiting schools in 30 centers for his 1991 Savage Inequalities, he found that reforms had not reached poor schools. He found sewage backup in East St. Louis schools, a crowded elementary school with four kindergartens in one windowless room in a Bronx roller rink, over 5,000 children in Chicago classes without a teacher.

"Public schools in the U.S. are more separate and less equal than they were when I began," Kozol wrote. "Racial segregation has been, and continues to be, largely uncontested." Kozol paints a grim picture of America's poor children condemned to schools that are underfunded, understaffed, physically crumbling, and imbued with despair. Reviewers called his book and its findings "impassioned..., laced with anger and indignation about how our public education system scorns so many of our children." Good suburban schools are good because they are well funded; bad slum schools are bad because they are underfunded. It is that simple, said Kozol, disputing former Presidents Reagan and Bush and other conservatives who have said, "You don't improve schools by throwing money at them." Money not only helps, wrote Kozol; but money is essential. Essential, too, concluded Kozol, is equality of educational opportunity.

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